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Drug traffickers take

By David Brock

control of parts of Mexico

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In the Arizona border town of Naco, a Mexican customs officer entering the United States was discovered transporting 150 pounds of marijuana in the trunk of his car. After a skirmish with U.S. Customs officials, during which he assaulted a U.S. officer, the man fled back to Mexico on foot. U.S. Customs agents exized the car, the marijuana and the Mexican's uniform iscket. Upon learning of the incident, William von Raab, the commissioner of Customs, imployed his Mexican cunterpart in a letter to take some action to find the would-be azunggler, who apparently is still employed at the Mexican customs agency. The only response from Maxico so far: a request that the man's jacket be returned.

turned. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, marijuana and herom trafficking from Mexico seemed under control; through aggressive joint action with the United States, Mexico's shere of its northern neighbor's heroin market dropped by half, to 35 percent. A 1984 report by the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control called Mexico's marijuana and opium poppy eradication program "me mormous success" and "the best in the world."

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But by 1986, the State Department concluded in a report that Mexico posed "the most serious problem in international narcotics control" for the United States. Diminishing control by the Mexican government over the drug trade, the report said, was "in part because of an apparent spread of drug-related corruption which has affected every facet of the enforcement program."

What happened? Officials in Mexico essentially supped cooperating with the United States, providing a boon to Mexican drug producers and traffickers, whose activities have reached alarming new heights in the past two years. U.S. officials estimate that Mexico is now the No. 1 source of heroin and marijuane entering the country. And although most cocaine is still produced in Combis, in the same two years Mexican dealers have become significant wholesale brokers, smuggling from Colombia at least one-third of the roughly 121 tons of cocaine believed to have been consumed in the United States last year. U.S. government estimates show that this new cocaine business brought Mexican drug traffickers about \$1.25 billion for the year.

This huge influx of additional money has emboldened the traffickers and allowed them to brie significant numbers of officials, paralyzing the Mexican government's ability to fight its drug war. U.S. officials is involved in the drug transpending the antience information clearly linking many who suppleedly engaged in the antiencords efforts.

For some months, rumors have circulated in Mexico Hat, Gen. Juan Arysylo Gardoqui, the defense minister who directs a significant part of Mexico drug gradication program, is himself involved in the drug trade, U.S. intelligence information clearly linking top officials of the Mexican security police, Mexico's Interpol office (a secund of the state of Sinales.

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state of Sinaloa.

U.S. law embrocement sources have confirmed that in early 1986, Miguel Felix Gallardo, a fugitive treafficker wanted in connection with the murder of a U.S. drug enforcement agent in 1985, was a guest at the ranch of Boledo Corro. The former governor is asid by U.S. sources to have made a point of looking the other way during his tenure in return for payoffa.

During the investigation of the 1985 murder of Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique Camarena Salazar, slain by Mexican drug traffickers, the extent of government drug-related corruption was first doc-

umented. In fact, U.S. law enforcement officials believe Mr. Camarena was killed because he was having success in gath ering information on corrupt Mexican police authorities and government offi-cials.

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Mendcan federal police officers under investigation in the Camarena case told investigators of their widespread practice of guarding drug crops and escorting shipments north in return for bribes and drugs. Their statements charged that Gabriel Gonzalez, the late chief of the homicide division of the federal police, ordered the agents to run errands for traffickers, guard their lavish parties and pass on tips about drug roadblocks.

Of 2,000 agents in the Federal Security Dispenses, and or Mexico's national police forces, 400 were dismissed because the government suspected they had illicit associations with drug trafficking, but no charges have been filed against any of them. The head of the directorate, Jose Antonio Corrilla Petrez, left the country

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One bright spot in the investigation of
the Camarena murder has been the arrest of Mr. Caro Quintero, reputedly a
major Sinaloa drug smuggler. He was
able to elude the authorities for months by staging a
getsway from the Guadalajara airport, which was
guarded by officers of the Federal Judicial Police. The
officers were under orders to arrest Mr. Caro Quintero.
In order to ensure his escape, he wrote a check for
\$300,000 and handed it to an aide. The aide showed it to
the top police commander and explained that it would be
cashed the next morning and distributed among the
officers if Mr. Caro Quintero Gew to Costa
Rica, where he was later captured. He is now awaiting
trial in Mexico City.
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While the Mexican government has arrested dozens of drug trafficers in connection with the murder of Mr. Camarena, only one conviction has been secured 36 far, that of Armando Pavon Reyes, the Federal Judicial Folice Sommander in Guadalajara who took Caro Quinterob belbe. He is out on \$300 bail awaiting appeal. This failure to gain convictions is part of a kerger pattern that has been a major irritant to U.S. officials who work with Mexico on the drug issue. The 1986 report from the State Department called Mexico's record of prosecuting drug traffickers a "dismal picture." Says one DEA official: "The Mexican laws are written to the advantage of the drug smugglers. They don't allow by a way to act homeone in the act. This means there



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Of 2,200 agents in the Federal Security Directorate, one of Mexico's national police forces, 400 were dismissed because the government suspected they had illicit "associations" with drug trafficking, but no charges have been filed against any of them. The head of the directorate, Jose Antonio Zorrilla Perez, left the country for Spain as revelations surfaced. His case has gained particular notoriety, as his signature was on a phony police croedential found in the possession of Rafael Caro Quintero.

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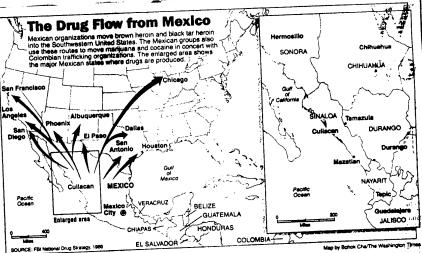
While the Mexican government has arrested dozens of drug traffickers in connection with the murder of Mr. Camarena, only one conviction has been secured so far, that of Armando Pavon Reyes, the Foleral Judicial Police commander in Gu

are few prosecutions."

In the wake of the Camarena investigation, Mr. Zorrilla was allowed to resign quietly. Miguel Aldana, for-



missioner of Customs William von Re



mer head of Mexico's Interpol office, left office overnight after reports surfaced that he took bribes from cocaine dealers. The Mexican government has also failed to prosecute the police officers believed to be involved in the torture of U.S. drug enforcement agent Victor Cortez Jr. in August 1986.

Official cooperation with the drug merchants takes many different forms, DEA officials say. The centerpiece of the drug enforcement program is the crop eradication effort. But in the past two years, says one drug agency source. U.S. officials have received reports that the "Mexican air fleet is not flying in the areas where cultivation is occurring. Or they say they are spraying when they are not, or they are spraying water instead of herbicides." Often, Mexican pilots in U.S. financed eradication programs are visited by drug traffickers after a successful run and bought off. They either make no more runs or skip fields when they do.

There are 13 elite zone commanders in Mexico's drug war. Consider the story of one, detailed in a recent Mexican press account. Police officer Hugo Quintanilla was promoted and put in charge of a fleet of helicopters and 20 pilots. His mandate: to destroy marijuana and popty cultivation in the south of Mexico. Within months, according to the report, Mr. Quintanilla was flying his air force at the beheat of the drug underworld, pocketing \$20,000 an are not to spray herbicides and bribing the policemen under him to go along with him. For \$70,000, the turned his officers into baggage handlers for an airborne U.S. bound shipment.

Mr. von Raab, in congressional testimony, summed up last year: "The Mexicans are, in effect, the freight forwarders and security services for Colombian drug strabate the first of the past few years, they argue that he had beset the first of the past few years, they argue the base beset the first of the past few years.

muggling groups."

No one can say with certainty why Mexico's drug problem is a subject to the problem in the problem is a subject to the first of the production to the part few years. They argue that Mexican officials, especially lower-ranking ones like local police officers, are practically incapable of turning their backs on the mammoth bribe offers of the locaine trade. Of the production level, a DEA official in Mexico says: "Look, you've got farmers who are doing nothing else. This is the only good cash crop they can produce." Others say that members of the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional, concerned about peasant unrest in the mountains, have ordered the police to turn a blind eye to cultivation of drugs. In addition, Mexico has become an alternative drug trafficking route — leading to Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California — as the United States has successfully slowed the flow of drugs into Florida Efforts to win similar victories along the border, however, have been stymied by Mexico's refusal to allow U.S. agents to pursue drug traffickers into Mexican territory. U.S. funding

for the Mexican antinarcotics program in 1987 is \$15

ion the Mexican animarcous program in 1967 is \$13 billion.

"As long as drug smugglers are free either to retarritheir planes to Mexico and land in safe haven, or for thisk, matter, drug smugglers are free just to quickly reads across the Rio Grande river and find themselves shaken, the U.S. effort is doomed to failure." Mr. von Randrestfield. Proposals for more rigid control of the Border by U.S. officials, in effect sealing off the semipermassless in 1900-mile border against unauthorized crossings, have not yet been seriously considered, U.S. officials say, Assystach proposal would be profoundly disturbing to Mexico, which would have to contain the thousands of disaffected Mexicans who stream across the border into the United States each year.

DEA officials in both the United States and Mexico, say that the Mexican government has a growing reads say that the Mexican government has a growing reads.

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interest in controlling the drug trade, as its expansion is weakening the authority of the central government as some regions. In November 1985, in southern Veranset state, drug traffickers killed 17 Mexican police officers,

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